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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 21, 32, 34, and 35 as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A shopping assistance method, comprising:
~~the following steps carried out by a service system upon receipt of~~
receiving a shopping enquiry sent by a remote an enquirer[[:]]
using an enquiry-device;

obtaining the geographic location of the enquiry-device;

selecting from multiple enquirer-independent functional significances known to the service system, a functional significance for the enquiry-device location by carrying out a first location-dependent database search using the enquiry-device geographic location as input;

determining a geographical search parameter in dependence both on the enquiry-device location and its selected functional significance ~~of the enquiry location,~~ different functional significances resulting in different geographic search parameter values;

finding an answer to the shopping enquiry by carrying out a second location-dependent database search using the geographical search parameter to control the geographical coverage of the search; and

returning the search results to the ~~enquirer~~ enquiry-device.

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2. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the geographical search parameter specifies at least one of the following:

- a particular shopping zone;
- a predetermined geographic area for the search;
- a geographic range for the search;
- one or more geographic foci for the search.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the first location-dependent database search includes checking a database of traders and their locations.

5-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the service system has a database of local traders giving their locations and contact details of their on-line database systems, the second location-dependent search including consulting the database of local traders and then contacting the on-line database systems of the traders determined as being within the geographical coverage set for the search and trading in items at least of the general type relevant to the enquiry.

17-20. (Cancelled)

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21. (Currently amended) A shopping-assistance service system, comprising:

an input subsystem for receiving a shopping enquiry sent by a remote an enquirer using an enquiry-device;

a location subsystem for determining the geographic location of the enquiry device;

a first database subsystem for carrying out a first location-dependent search using the enquiry-device geographic location as input, [[to]] selected from enquirer-independent functional significances recorded in the first database subsystem, wherein there is a functional significance for the enquiry-device location;

a second database subsystem for carrying out a second location-dependent search to find an answer to the shopping enquiry using both the enquiry-device location and its selected functional significance to control the geographical coverage of the search, different functional significances resulting in different geographic search parameter values; and

an output subsystem for directly or indirectly returning the search results to the enquiry-device.

22. (Cancelled)

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23. (Previously presented) A system according to claim 21, wherein the first database subsystem comprises a database of traders and their locations.

24-30. (Cancelled)

31. (Previously presented) A system according to claim 21, wherein the second database subsystem comprises a database of local traders including their location and contact details of their on-line database systems, the search subsystem being arranged to consult the database of local traders and then contact the on-line database systems of the traders that are determined as being within the geographical coverage set for the search and trading in items at least of the general type relevant to the enquiry.

32. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein where the first location-dependent database search attributes more than one functional significance to the enquiry-device location, selecting the functional significance that is more specific in nature ~~is selected~~ as the functional significance for the enquiry-device location.

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33. (Previously presented) A system according to claim 21, wherein the first database subsystem is arranged such that where the first location-dependent database search attributes more than one functional significance to the enquiry-device location, the functional significance that is more specific in nature is selected as the functional significance for the enquiry-device location.

34. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the functional different significances include at least two of the following:

- (a) shop;
- (b) shopping area;
- (c) airport;
- (d) motorway; and
- (e) road.

35. (Currently amended) The system of claim 21, wherein the different functional significances include at least two of the following:

- (a) shop;
- (b) shopping area;
- (c) airport;
- (d) motorway; and
- (e) road.